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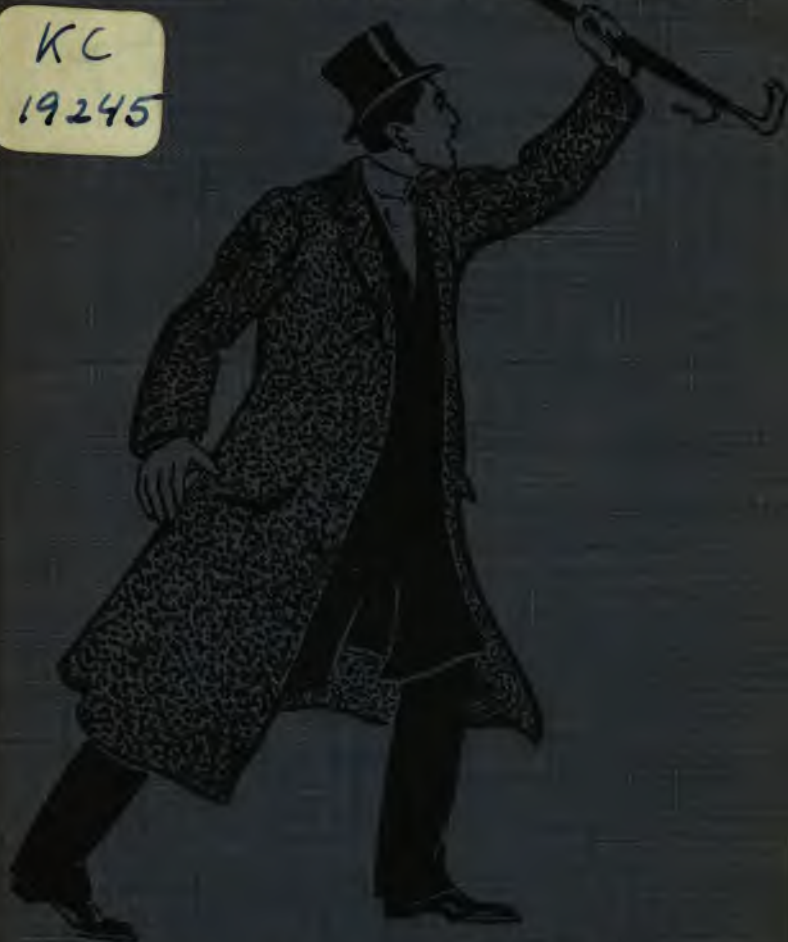
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THE BACHELOR  
AND THE BABY

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[See p. 18

“WHOSE BABY IS IT?”

or

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# The Bachelor AND The Baby

BY  
MARGARET CAMERON

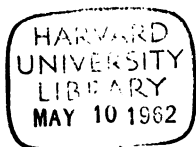
AUTHOR OF  
"THE CAT AND THE CANARY"  
ETC. ETC.

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# **The Bachelor and the Baby**





## The Bachelor and the Baby

**T**HE circumstances which led to Franklin Keene's being on that particular train were peculiar enough in themselves to warrant a word of explanation. He lived in San Francisco, and had intended to spend Christmas there, but the business which had brought him across the continent had been unexpectedly complicated, detaining him in New York. His one close friend in town, Dr. James Burleigh, the noted alienist, had vainly urged him to make his presence known to some of his many acquaintances in or near the city, but Keene maintained

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that Christmas was a day sacred to intimate gatherings, and that he should be much more comfortable with a book and an easy - chair at the club than he could possibly be in a company where he must feel himself in but not of the circle.

Therefore the doctor, after putting his friend up at the club, had gone his appointed way, not without misgivings, and Keene was prepared to spend a solitary Christmas, when, on the morning of the 24th, he was called to the telephone and required to assure the possessor of a pleasantly modulated feminine voice that he really was Franklin Keene—*the* Franklin Keene, “from the beloved West.” Knowing something of the clannishness of Californians in the East, and never having heard of B. Franklin Keene, of Chicago—it is doubtful whether in any event it would have occurred to the

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Californian that Chicago could properly be classified as belonging to "the West"—he admitted his identity, and was warmly urged to dine on the following day with Mr. and Mrs. Edward Logan, in Macalac, a small New Jersey suburb. Mrs. Logan explained that she had just learned, from a man who had seen him at the club, of his presence in town, and, while they had never actually met, she hoped he would share her feeling that the possession of so many friends in common constituted acquaintance, at least.

When he still seemed a little puzzled, she added: "Oh, perhaps you don't remember me as Mrs. Logan? Before my marriage I was Grace Bennett."

Keene had friends in San Francisco who spoke often of a Miss Bennett. He had been under the impression that her name was Laura, and had not heard that

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she had married, but reflected that certainly she was the best authority as to her name and state. In the mean time she was rapidly explaining that as neither she nor Mr. Logan had any relatives in the East, they had asked two or three equally detached friends to spend Christmas with them, and assured him that his presence would give the feast quite a family aspect to her, as it was so long since she had seen any one from "home." When he had accepted, she said that Mr. Logan would look him up during the day with a more formal invitation—she had 'phoned on the mere chance of catching him—but lest they should miss connections she gave him directions concerning the train he was to take, and said that her husband would meet him at their station.

Keene's business kept him down-town

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for the remainder of the day, so Mr. Logan's failure to find him was not surprising, and he set off for the suburbs, at mid-day on Christmas, with a sense of amused and adventurous anticipation.

This was still his state of mind when, as the train started after one of its many stops, he heard behind him a startled exclamation: "Oh! This is my station!" and turned to see a pretty, well-dressed young woman, a baby in her arms, already wrenching open the door at the back of the coach, which was the last of the train. He sprang after her and caught her shoulder when she had descended the first step.

"You can't do it!" he cried.

"I must! This is my station!"

"Impossible!" The train gained headway with every second.

"I tell you I *must!*" imperiously.

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“Then give me the baby!”

Realizing that her reasons might be cogent, and that there was no time for argument, he seized the child and swung himself from the now rapidly moving train. The effort to check the momentum thus acquired taxed his agility, and when, once sure of his own footing, he looked about for the young woman, it was to discover her still standing on the back platform of the departing train, alternately beating the hand-rail and stretching out her arms to the baby he held. In vain he thrust up his hand and jerked it wildly in futile effort to remind her of the bell-rope. She fell to pounding the rail again in helpless frenzy, and the train passed round a curve and out of sight.

“Well, I’ll — be — hanged!” gasped Keene, for the moment conscious only of surprise—a comparatively tranquil emo-

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tion which he was not permitted to enjoy.

"*Yaa-a-a-a-ah!*" came a vigorous remonstrance from under his arm.

"Here! Hi! Suffering cats! what's the matter with you!"

Fearfully clutching the long and voluminous draperies where they seemed most solid, he eventually succeeded in bringing the now struggling infant to an upright position, only to be terrified by the increasing violence of its contortions and the rending strength of its screams. He was a bachelor of thirty-eight, "fond," as he afterward said, "of children of an intelligent age, but with no fancy for irrational, bellowing little animals like that"; and it seemed to him that no merely human mechanism could long withstand such strain as that baby now proceeded to put upon itself.



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In vain he jiggled it, exactly, he was sure, as he had seen nurses do. The shrieks continued, and the little red face grew redder.

“There, there! Quit that! ‘Sh-sh—’sh! Confound that woman! Why didn’t she jump? What would she do with you now?”

A flash of memory showed him what she would probably do. He had seen other people do it, with astonishing results. Placing his hands firmly about the child’s body under the arms, he lifted it high above his head, rolling it slightly to and fro. At the same time he assumed a determinedly cheerful grin, and engagingly gurgled: “Googly—googly—googly—goo! Keechery—keechery—tschk! Tschk! *Whee—ketchum!*” without apparent effect. The baby’s vehemence in no wise abated, and Keene attempted

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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once more to clasp the kicking, writhing little body against his shoulder.

"Here! Don't go on like that!" he begged, perspiration starting all over him as he desperately reversed the child's position, and felt it curl around his arm and spring into rigidity again. "Good Lord! Are you going to have spasms? What shall I do?"

Not since a Thanksgiving day, years before, when he had realized that nothing but his kicking could save his beloved 'varsity team from ignominious defeat on the gridiron, had he known anything so nearly resembling terror.

"*Yah! Yi! Yah!*" spluttered his charge, getting a fresh breath. Then, opening its toothless little mouth to an extent that Keene was certain must prove fatal: "*Yaa-a-a-a-a-aie!*"

He caught sight of a man leaving the

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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otherwise deserted station, and called:  
“Hey! Hey, there! Stop a minute!”

The man paused, looking back.

“Are you the station agent?”

“Um-h’m!”

“Where are you going?”

“Home to dinner.”

“Well—see here, do you know anything about children?”

“Nope.” He would have passed on, but Keene intercepted him.

“Have you any idea whose baby this is?”

“No,” suspiciously. “Ain’t it yours?”

“It is not!”

“How’d you come by it, then?”

“A young woman was going to jump off that train with it. To save her a fall I took the child and swung off, and—she didn’t. She was carried on.”

The man grinned. “Done you to a

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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turn, didn't she?" he observed. "Christmas, too!"

"Not at all!" indignantly protested Keene. "She was not at all that sort of person. She was very much distressed. She stood on the back platform and cried. She'll be back on the next train."

"Oh, sure!" The man spat derisively.

"In the mean time—I don't know what to do with—with this." He helplessly indicated his shrieking burden. "There seems to be something the matter."

"Sounds colicky. Better take him in the station. There's a fire there."

"Well, but—see here, you're married, ain't you?"

"Um-h'm."

"Children of your own?"

"Nope."

"Don't you want to take this poor little beggar home, and—"

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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"You bet I don't!" The man started hastily on.

"Here! Listen! I'll pay you well, and the mother—"

"Not much you don't! That's your game, is it? Well, I'm on to *you* all right! And see here, you!" he added, threateningly. "Don't you go leaving that kid in the station and skipping out, neither! This here depot ain't no foundling asylum!"

"I certainly shouldn't desert the child," said Keene, with dignity.

"No?" The man leered unpleasantly. "Well, anyhow, you won't do it here—see? You're just a little too smooth!"

He turned to the door of the little building, closed it, and produced a large key from his pocket.

"What are you doing?" demanded the Californian. "Open that door! I'm going to wait for—"

## The Bachelor and the Baby

"Oh no, you ain't! You're going to hit the pike. That's what you're going to do. It 'll be cold waiting around this here platform this afternoon."

"But I tell you that woman will be back on the next train, and she'll—"

"Oh, sure!" sardonically. "But there ain't going to be any more trains till night."

"What?"

"Nope. There's expresses, but they don't stop here. First north-bound train from this station, five-twenty-three."

"Jove!" Since his chivalrous adventure Keene had not before remembered the Logans and their dinner.

"First south-bound train, six-twelve."

"But—oh, she'll never wait for that! I tell you she was frantic! She'll walk back!"

"Oh, sure she will! Huh!"

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"And I—see here, you've got to help me out of this! There's a good fellow! You take charge of this youngster until the mother—"

"Not on your life!" Keene produced a ten-dollar bill, but the man continued to back away, repeating: "No, sir, not on your life! I have trouble enough of my own!"

"But I'm due in Macalac—how far is that?"

"Next station. Five miles by the road, three by the track."

"I've got to get there somehow in a hurry. I'm expected there to dine."

"Oh, sure! Say, you're the real thing, ain't you? I wonder you didn't think of that before! Well, it's the pike for yours." He locked the door. "Now, skip!"

Indignation, appeal, bribery, and threats proved alike unavailing, and the



"I'M EXPECTED THERE TO DINE"

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## **The Bachelor and the Baby**

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weeping child in his arms added to Keene's helplessness. He learned that the only telegraph-office in the village was in the station, and that the operator had gone to Newark for the afternoon. The station telephone was out of order and the "store" was closed. There was no livery-stable.

He resolved to appeal to some kind-hearted woman in the neighborhood to give the baby care and shelter until the mother's return, and accordingly betook himself to a near-by cottage, the sinister station agent lounging observantly behind.

The door was opened by a gaunt, middle-aged woman, whose holiday smile changed to an expression of suspicious doubt as he said:

"Madam, this child's mother has been accidentally carried on to the next station. She will return as soon as possible. Would

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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you be willing to care for the child until she comes back?"

"You the father?"

"No; I—"

"Whose baby is it?"

"I—I don't know." The woman sniffed and partially closed the door, peering around its edge at him. "I saw this lady about to get off a moving train. To save her from a fall I took the child and jumped, and she—"

"When you'd never seen her before?"

"No, I never saw her before; but she's evidently a very nice woman, and she was coming to this place. Now, you are quite near the station, and if you would take the child until she returns—"

"You goin' to wait for her?"

"No, I—I can't. You see"—he hastily combated the growing distrust in the woman's face—"I have an engagement

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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in Macalac—and it may be an hour or more before the mother can get back.”

“Yes, I guess it ’ll be all that,” said she, cynically, and was about to close the door.

“But, madam! It’s very cold—and the child is crying.”

“I ain’t deaf.”

“Won’t you at least let me have a glass of milk for it? I’ll pay—”

“A glass o’ milk! Land o’ love! You don’t think a young one o’ that age *drinks* milk, do you?” Then, as he flushed hotly, she added, with severity: “My advice to you, young man, is to take that poor, sufferin’ child back to wherever you got it from, just as soon as the Lord ’ll let you. I ain’t makin’ any accusations, but it’s pretty clear to me that you’ve got enough to answer for now, ’thout addin’ murder.” With that she closed the door.

Keene turned away, wrath in his heart,

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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but, discovering the grinning station agent leaning on the fence, he proceeded to the gate with as much dignity as he could command under the circumstances.

“Didn’t make it work, did you?”

“Your town doesn’t seem remarkable for its display of Christian charity and good-will to man,” said the Californian.

“Oh, we’ve got charity enough.”

“But it begins at home?”

“Well, we ain’t no easy mark.”

Keene shrugged his shoulders and passed on to a pleasant-looking house well back from the street. He rang the bell and waited; the baby wailed and the station agent hung over the gate. Presently Keene rang again, and again waited.

“Might as well quit when you get tired,” called his tormentor. “There ain’t nobody home.”

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"Why in thunder didn't you say so?" muttered Keene.

When he reached the street the waiting man confronted him.

"Now, that's about enough," said he. "You skip!"

"Step aside," said Keene, curtly, and would have passed him.

"No, you don't!" he objected, clinching an ugly fist. "You're mighty slick, comin' into a quiet country village with your high-hat and your paytent-leathers, and your story about a distracted mother. Christmas, too! But we ain't such hay-seeds as we mebbe look, and your story ain't good enough. You might find some soft-hearted woman to believe it—I believed some of it myself till you begun tryin' to work the kid off onto me—and you ain't goin' to get the chance to fool 'em. You're goin' to hike—*right now!*"

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"All right," said Keene, after a moment. "I'm handicapped just now, but—I'll settle this with you later. I'm going up the track. If I miss the mother—if she comes back by the road, you tell her that I've taken the child— Why, of course!" he cried, jubilantly. "*That's* what I'll do! I'll take it straight to Mrs. Logan! Mrs. Edward Logan, of Macalac. Will you remember that?"

"I'll remember fast enough—when she comes."

So Keene turned his face to the sharp north wind and set off on his three-mile tramp up the track, plotting the downfall of that station agent as soon as he could get a letter to the division superintendent, but consoling himself that in walking to Macalac he should the sooner be able to return to the poor, anxious little mother the baby, who, exhausted by its long out-

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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cry, had at last subsided into comparative quiet.

The station agent, after watching him out of sight, went to a neighbor's telephone and held a short conversation with Mrs. Edward Logan, of Macalac.

On the road, which lay, a part of the time, within sight from the track, Keene saw sundry vehicles, but from none of them came the eager signal for which, with each fresh approach, he hopefully watched. On the tracks nothing passed except an express-train, hurling itself southward, and he could not know that it had been flagged at Macalac and was preparing to stop at the station he had just left.

Once he paused to fumble for the little hands under the white cloak, and, finding them cold, he stripped off his heavy overcoat, wrapped it around the child, and



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strode on into the teeth of the bitter wind. Soothed by the warmth and lulled by the swing of his quick gait, the baby finally slept. The wind grew colder and Keene more ravenously hungry; and so, at last, they came to Macalac station, to find it entirely deserted. No frantic waiting mother, no attendant, no message. Then for the first time Keene shared, momentarily, the suspicions of the pessimistic station agent, but immediately dismissed the thought as unworthy. Somehow he had missed her, and nothing remained but to throw himself and the baby upon the mercy of Mrs. Logan, whose hospitable Western heart would surely respond to the call.

Puzzled as to which direction to take from the station, he saw a phaeton coming down one of the roads, and walked toward it.



"OREN," SHE EXCLAIMED. "LISTEN! THAT SOUNDS  
LIKE BRUDDER!"



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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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"I beg your pardon," he said, stopping as it approached, "but can you direct me to the house of Mr. Edward Logan?" The baby, aroused by the cessation of motion and the sound of voices, whimpered slightly, and the young woman in the phaeton turned bright, startled eyes toward the muffled figure in Keene's arms.

"Logan?" said the young fellow driving. "Certainly. It's the new house—the first to the left after you turn the curve yonder."

"Thank you," said Keene, starting on.

"*Yaa-a-a-a-ai!*" contributed the baby, thrusting a hand out through the air-hole Keene had left in the wrapping.

The boy in the phaeton twitched the reins, but his sister laid restraining fingers on his arm.

"Oren!" she exclaimed. "Listen! That sounds like Brudder!"

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"Well, I've always told you and Ethel that all babes sound alike to me. Now you see the force of—"

"*Yaa-a-a-a-aiie!*" came down the wind to them.

"That *is* Brudder!" cried the girl, throwing back the robe and turning to spring out.

"Oh, Tommy!" He held her arm. "How could it be Brudder? Don't be an idiot, Florence! One in a family's enough, and Ethel's fairly daffy over the boy!"

"Well, you've nothing to say!" she retorted. "And I tell you that *is* Brudder! I saw his little hand, with the ring I gave him tied on. I *did!* I thought it might be a coincidence, but now—! Oren, *will* you turn around and follow that man? Or shall I get out?"

Meanwhile, Keene swung along at a

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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brisk gait, enlivened by the prospect of food, warmth, and sympathy.

At the door he was told that Mrs. Logan was engaged; but he sent in his name, with the message that he had been unavoidably detained by an accident, and would be grateful for a few words with either Mr. or Mrs. Logan. The servant looked curiously at him, and eventually admitted him, rather doubtfully, he thought, to a reception-hall. He heard the light cadence of laughing voices in an adjoining room, and eagerly sniffed the mingled aromas of coffee and tobacco as he sank into a chair.

“Yah! Ya-ah! *Yaa-a-a-a-a-a-aie!*” demanded the baby, digging one fist into half-open eyes, and ineffectually trying to swallow the other. Sounds in the next room suddenly ceased.

“Has he come, Katie?” asked a wom-

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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an's voice—the pleasant voice he had heard over the telephone. The maid's reply was lost in another outburst from his ward, whom he succeeded in quieting somewhat.

"What!" he next heard. "Oh no! Impossible! Ned, he's come, and he says his name is Franklin Keene."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" replied a man. "Keene, eh? *Franklin* Keene? Are you sure, Katie?"

"No, no!" cried several voices at once. "Surely not!"

"You'd better see him, Ned," suggested Mrs. Logan.

The curtains parted and a tall, clean-limbed, clean-featured man, a few years Keene's junior, entered the hall.

"Good-evening," said he.

Keene arose, the whimpering baby still cradled in his arm, and extended his

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hand, which the other took, a puzzled look creeping into his eyes as he surveyed his guest.

“I owe you a series of apologies, Mr. Logan,” began the Californian. “First for failing to notify Mrs. Logan that I should not be able to get here in time for dinner—but there was no possible means of communication; and second, for appearing at this hour—and, as you see, not alone. It was like this: I took the twelve-twenty-five train—”

“From town?”

“Yes, of course, from town. We were just pulling out of the station below here, when I discovered a young woman with a baby—this baby—about to jump from the moving train.” He told briefly the story of his leap from the train, and its results, humorously touching upon the suspicions of the station agent and the dis-



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comforts of his long walk, concluding: "And in the end, having failed to find the mother, I could see but one solution of the trouble; and that was to come here and throw myself and the baby on your hospitality."

"Y-yes," said Logan, reflectively rubbing his chin as he scrutinized the man before him. "We heard you were coming."

"You heard?"

"We know all about your efforts to dispose of the child down the line, and we were told that you were coming here. The station agent telephoned."

"But I wasn't trying—"

"Oh, weren't you?" Although Logan smiled pleasantly as he spoke, his eyes were steely. "Evidently the station agent judged by appearances. He said you were a smooth proposition, but I hadn't

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looked for anything quite as clever as this. You see, Mr.—er—Keene, the only flaw in your story lies in the fact that the real Mr. Keene—Mr. Franklin Keene—is already here.”

“What’s that?”

“Is already here,” succinctly repeated Mr. Logan. “Keene, will you step into the hall a moment, please?”

There entered then a slender young man with scanty hair and a lean, incisive countenance.

“*This* is Mr. Franklin Keene,” affably continued Logan. “Now—one moment, please!—we knew that you were coming, we knew that you would attempt to leave the child here, but it would interest me very much to learn how *you* knew that we expected Mr. Keene here to-day.”

“That happens to be my name.” Logan’s smile at this was politely incred-

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## **The Bachelor and the Baby**

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ulous. "And when Mrs. Logan telephoned me at the club—"

"She telephoned, certainly, but—" He turned quickly to the other man. "Didn't you talk to her over the 'phone yesterday morning?"

"No, certainly not."

Mrs. Logan—a pretty, graceful woman—pulled apart the curtains and entered, silent and startled.

"She didn't call you up, inviting you out here to-day?"

"Certainly not," repeated the lean one. "You asked me yourself when we met—"

"Yes, yes! But she had already telephoned—"

"Not to me. You didn't say anything about it."

"I didn't know it until I got home last night. So you"—to the Californian—

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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“got that message, did you? Are you a member of the club?”

“Only temporarily. I am the guest there of Dr. Burleigh.” The baby raised its voice again, and Keene mechanically tried to hush it.

“Of Dr.—ah!”—Logan’s tone suggested that many things had suddenly been made clear to him—“Dr. James Burleigh?”

“Oh, that poor little baby!” Mrs. Logan impulsively took the child and cuddled it, muffled as it was, in her arms, retreating with it to her husband’s side.

“Thank you,” said Keene to her, gratefully. “Yes, James Burleigh. We’re old friends.”

“Who’s Burleigh?” asked Keene’s namesake.

Logan drew a card and pencil from his pocket, upon which he scrawled, “Specialist mental disorders,” for his friend’s eye,

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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while he continued, in a changed tone: "I see, I see. And you somehow got the message intended for Mr. Keene—"

"But I repeat, my name is Keene!"

The situation was growing irritating.

The door-bell whirred shrilly, and the maid slipped past the group to answer the summons.

"Certainly, certainly—that's all right." Logan's hasty reassurance failed somewhat of its soothing intent. "And you thought it was for you. And then, on the way out here—"

"I want to see Mrs. Logan!" demanded an excited girl's voice at the door. "I want to ask—I saw a man with a baby—"

Those in the hall turned at the interruption, Logan immediately exclaiming: "Hello, Faulkner! Come in."

"Thanks. I hope you'll pardon us, but my sister imagines—"



“WHERE IS MY SISTER?”

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## The Bachelor and the Baby

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"It *is* Brudder! It *is* Brudder!" Florence had darted to the baby, thrust aside the heavy wrap, and now, clasping him to her breast, she confronted Keene, panting: "Where is my sister? What has happened to Ethel?"

The curtains screening the library were hastily pushed back, revealing the other guests clustered in the doorway, the men still holding their half-consumed cigars.

"Your sister!" repeated Keene, a little dazed at this fresh complication.

"This is her baby! Where is she?"

"Oh!" Infinite relief spoke in the tone. "Thank Heaven!"

"*Where is she?*"

"I haven't the faintest idea"—Keene smiled reassurance into the anxious eyes—"but I'm afraid she's somewhere between here and the next village—and I'm afraid she's frightened," he gently added.



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Then he told the story again, very quietly, to Florence Faulkner.

"Why, Ned," whispered Mrs. Logan, "he's very— Don't you find him attractive?" Her husband nodded, never taking his observant glance from the Californian's face. "And you really think—?"

Again he nodded. "Unquestionably, I'm afraid."

"But he seems so sane!"

"They often do. But he's firmly possessed of this hallucination about the name—and we know of his efforts to dispose of the child; and yet, you see yourself that, normally, he's not the sort of fellow to—" He paused, shaking his head.

"Oh, what a pity!"

"Oh, Oren—do you—do you think—?" faltered Florence, when the tale was told.

"It doesn't seem a bit like Ethel. She's

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always so careful—especially with Brud-der. Oh no! She never would have tried—”

“Perhaps,” suggested Logan, “Mr.—Keene saw her standing near the door and fancied—”

“Look here,” demanded the college boy, “are you telling this straight? Because if my sister”—he hesitated under the steady, blazing indignation of Keene’s glance—“because if my sister—” he continued, brokenly, to the company, and stopped.

“I don’t think you need be alarmed about Mrs. Gerard’s safety, Faulkner,” said Logan, quickly; “but if I were you I’d lose no time in looking her up. It is doubtful whether Mr. Keene can tell us anything more about her. Have we explained to you that we have two Mr. Keenes here? One is a friend from the

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West, and the other is a guest"—significantly—"of Dr. James Burleigh."

"Oh!" gasped Florence. "Oh, mercy!" and clasped her nephew closer.

"Good Lord!" cried Keene, in sheer exasperation. "Of course I'm his guest! But I'm not his patient, if that's what you mean! We're friends. We were room-mates at college. We played on the same—"

"Yes, yes, that's all right. You are just old chums. We all understand that perfectly. Now, don't let's get excited."

"Excited, man! I'm as sane—yes, by Jupiter! I'm a whole lot saner than you are!"

"Of course, you're as sane as anybody. Now, that's all right, isn't it?" Logan laughed easily, with a restraining glance at the women, who were showing an inclination to huddle away. "Now we un-

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derstand each other perfectly and everything's all right. Faulkner, you'd better leave your sister and the baby here, and go at once to find Mrs. Gerard."

"Oh, poor Ethel!" sobbed Florence. She turned a tear-wet face to Keene. "Tell me truly—*truly*—*did* you get off that train with the baby to save Ethel?"

"Truly, truly, I did," said he, gravely and gently. "Do you believe me?"

For a moment she looked into his steady eyes. Then she laid her hands in his. "Yes, *I* believe you. Because—because, you see, you took off your coat to wrap the baby in. You wouldn't have done that if—if—"

"Bless your heart!" said he. "You're all right! Now, come on, Mr. Faulkner. We'll go out and find your other sister. That is—you're not afraid, I suppose?"

The college boy, himself a man of im-

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pressive inches, laughed a little at that. "Oh no," he said, "I'm not afraid."

"All right. And when Jim Burleigh gets back"—Keene addressed Logan—"I'll get him to give me a certificate of mental soundness, and then I'll be in a position to ask you what part of California *your* Franklin Keene comes from."

"California!" cried Mrs. Logan.

"Yes, California!"

"Oh, I'm not from the coast," said the lean one. "Chicago's my home."

Keene turned a bewildered face to the hostess. "You *said* California, didn't you?"

"Did I? Oh no, I couldn't! I must have said 'the beloved West.' That's what I call it."

Meanwhile young Faulkner had been muttering to himself: "California. Cali—

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Keene of California! Keene—of California?" and now he broke out, sharply:

"See here; what was your college?"

Keene mentioned his alma mater.

"Why, say! You're not—you're never 'Kicking Keene of '92'?"

"Yes, I am."

"You are? You are?" The boy seized him by both hands. "Why, people, this man was one of the greatest football players this country ever—why, he kicked five goals running—"

"No, I didn't," interrupted Keene. "It was only four."

"I know all about him! Crazy nothin'! He's Keene—*the* Keene! Keene of California!"

Nobody but the maid had heard the door-bell, but they all heard the mother's cry as she ran to gather in her boy.

When the excitement had cooled a little,

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somebody discovered Keene's famished condition, and there ensued much rivalry to make him comfortable. The first thing they brought him was liquid, and he looked over the glass at young Faulkner, asking:

"What do you call that boy?"

"His small sister has dubbed him 'Brudder,' and that goes while the rest of us squabble over whether he shall be named Scott, after his father, or Richard, after his grandfather, or Oren, after his other grandfather and me. But I can tell you one thing. After to-night—and I know Florence and Ethel will back me up in it—after to-night my vote goes for Franklin Keene!"

"Well, here's to him, anyhow," said the Californian, laughing.

"How well it has all ended!" sighed Florence, happily.

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“Oh, I don’t know!” objected Keene, looking at her. “Why ended? Why assume that it’s all over? Somehow, I’d rather you’d think of it as a good beginning.”

And that is what it proved to be.

**THE END**









